



STATE OF THE JUDICIARY



WASHINGTON
COURTS

Fair and impartial justice is as important now as it was in the past, and as it will be in the future. I hope you will join us in supporting the continued effectiveness of a fair and independent judicial branch for all Washingtonians.

Barbara Madsen



CHIEF JUSTICE BARBARA A. MADSEN
Washington State Supreme Court

Greetings Governor Inslee, members of the Washington State Legislature, judicial officers, elected officials and residents of Washington.

When Washington first became a state and started building the Capitol Campus, the Temple of Justice was the first building constructed. The State founders recognized the critical importance of establishing a justice infrastructure so that the new state's residents would have their safety, rights and properties protected, and an impartial avenue for airing grievances.

Now, 103 years after construction began, it is my pleasure as Chief Justice to present a report on the work of the courts in 2015, as well as the progress and current challenges facing Washington's judicial branch.

Maintaining a healthy judicial system is continual work, and requires:

- A commitment to examining data and social science in order to understand where our system needs to improve. See page 5 about an innovative new guardianship program to help courts better serve vulnerable residents; page 6 to see what the judicial branch is learning about serious barriers faced by former prisoners trying to regain productive lives; and page 10 to see what we learned in 2015 about juveniles in the justice system.
- Technology to keep critical information available, quickly shareable between courts and justice agencies, and to efficiently manage approximately 2 million cases filed each year in Washington courts. See pages 12–13 to learn about the successful launch of a modern case management system for state superior courts, progress on a new system for courts of limited jurisdiction, and other technology and innovations that will help our courts function better.
- A dedication to continually improving the administration of justice, how the courts do their work with efficiency and transparency. See page 16 about the launch this month of a new mandate (General Court Rule 31.1) that spells out specific processes and timelines for providing court administrative records upon request.
- Well-trained judicial officers, court managers and staff — the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) develops and coordinates more than 8,000 training hours for more than 1,550 judicial officers, county clerks, court staff and others. See page 19 for a substantial but partial list of AOC work in support of effective courts.



MADSEN, CONTINUED

As this report shows, Washington courts took some excellent steps forward in 2015. While we celebrate this progress, we must also recognize the real challenges facing our courts now, and in the future.

Developing and maintaining a fair and just court system has always involved challenges. This is an especially appropriate time to review some of these challenges with the world having just celebrated the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta this past year.

Signed by England's King John in 1215 (and then soon repudiated by him), the Magna Carta arrived when there was little consensus on what constituted justice. At that time, few thought it important to apply justice equally to all, and rulers believed the law did not apply to them — that they were above it.

The Magna Carta did not include the many important components of our current justice system, but it launched the conversation and the hope for such systems and is credited with beginning the modern search for justice.

While we have come a very long way in 800 years, we know that establishing and maintaining a

system of impartial, independent and accessible courts requires constant vigilance.

Public belief in our government and our society rests on a conviction that laws and governmental actions will be fair, and if they are not, that an unbiased and independent branch of government exists where they can seek help and be heard — an independent branch with actual authority and respect from the other branches.

As judges, we are committed to the rule of law. In this role, we are often asked to make difficult decisions based on local and state laws, prior case law and the state and federal constitutions, and we understand that not every decision will be a popular one.

On the anniversary of the Magna Carta, however, a troubling trend has emerged across the country with the judicial branch's role coming under attack in both obvious and subtle ways. Criticism of unpopular court decisions have spawned retaliations against judges across the country, from South Carolina to Kansas.

While we can agree to disagree, an attack on the independence of the judicial branch causes people

to lose the belief that courts can, and will, protect their rights. When people fear they cannot receive a fair hearing from the co-equal branch of government assigned that important role, it undermines confidence in all of government and in democracy itself.

Not all challenges to a healthy justice system are blatant — most are more subtle, involving budget neglect, overloading of public defense attorneys and assistant attorneys general, adopting laws requiring court action without additional funding, and a crumbling court infrastructure causing delays in resolving cases. A local legislative body might unappoint a part-time judge who they feel imposes too much jail time or does not levy enough fines, or might try to strip judges of certain cases. But each of these actions erodes the fair and independent justice system that people of this state have a constitutional right to expect and rely on.

Fair and impartial justice is as important now as it was in 1215, and as it will be in the future.

I hope you will join us in supporting the continued effectiveness of a fair and independent judicial branch for all Washingtonians.



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Page 5: *Engaged Hands* by Kenneth Lu is licensed under CC BY 2.0



Guardianship Network Provides Coordinated Support Efforts

In 2015, Washington became just one of 10 states to be named by the National Guardianship Network as a WINGS state and provided with grant funding and support to launch the state's Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS).

The WINGS program brings together the efforts of many diverse court, governmental and community guardianship stakeholders in order to improve judicial processes, protect individual rights, meet needs, address funding and ensure guardianship accountability.

An increase in the aging population — with that population needing more court and community involvement — has created a growing need for coordination of information and efforts regarding guardianship.

Washington WINGS launched on August 7, 2015 with a day-long conference in Wenatchee, free and open to the public. It was attended by more than 200 people including judges, family guardians, social workers, guardians ad litem, attorneys, advocates, legislators, mental health professionals, and many more.

Sponsors of the conference included the Washington Supreme Court; the state Department of Social and Health Services (Home and Community Services Division); the Washington Association of Professional Guardians; the Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby; the Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging; Aging and Adult Care of Central Washington and Cheryl Marshall; the Tom and Helen Goldsmith Memorial Grant; Gary Beagle, Beagle, Burk and Associates; the National Guardianship Network; the State Justice Institute; and the Albert and Elaine Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging.

"It's important that we build the best network we can to provide our loved ones with decisional support when they are in need," said Shirley Bondon, manager of the Office of Guardianship and Elder Services at the Administrative Office of the Courts. "This conference is another step toward creating that strong network."

Prior to the conference, high-level recommendations were identified from a survey of 454 individuals and stakeholders, clustered into three areas:

- Supporting family and friends of persons needing decisional support;
- Improving assessment of persons needing support;
- Improving guardianship standards and practices.

From the conference came 23 prioritized recommendations and four ongoing workgroups to help refine and implement the recommendations, as well as a fifth ad-hoc committee to plan future conferences.

The second WINGS Conference is scheduled for 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 17 at the Bell Harbor International Conference Center in Seattle. The conference will provide training, policy discussion and networking opportunities regarding the priorities identified in the first Washington WINGS conference.

"It's important that we build the best network we can to provide our loved ones with decisional support when they are in need."



What is guardianship?

Guardianship is a formal legal process to give a person, a "guardian," the power to make decisions for another person. This is sometimes referred to as "decisional support."

Courts grant guardianships only for a person determined to be legally incapacitated, meaning the person has a significant risk of personal or financial harm. The risk must be evidenced by a demonstrated inability over time to manage property or financial affairs, or arrange adequately for nutrition, health, housing or physical safety. Advanced age, eccentricity, poverty, and medical diagnosis are not sufficient to justify guardianship.

Guardianship is not a way to force someone who is competent to do what someone else thinks he or she should do. Guardianship should be viewed as an option of last resort because it can be costly (involves going to court) and it deprives an adult of significant personal rights.



Symposium Reveals Struggles of Prisoners' Reentry into Society

In 2014, more than 7,600 people were released from prisons into Washington communities.

The vast majority have spouses, children, elderly parents or other family members who would benefit from their successful reentry into society, but most will face significant struggles with employment, housing, healthcare, education and other basic components of living in a community.

Both hard data and personal stories of life before and after prison were presented to the Washington Supreme Court in a May 2015 symposium, "Reentry: Do We Really Care About People After Prison?" The symposium was presented by the Washington Supreme Court Minority and Justice Commission in partnership with the Seattle University School of Law.

The symposium was the third in an annual series presented by the Minority and Justice Commission on areas of the

judicial system that have disproportionate impact on communities of color, and are in need of information and attention.

"I could not be more proud of the work of our Minority and Justice Commission in putting this information together," Chief Justice Barbara Madsen said to the packed courtroom attending the symposium.

The topic of prison reentry was chosen because of the immense growth in incarceration across the U.S. since 1970, and the widespread impact of that incarceration on families, communities, and the disproportionate impact on people of color, said Supreme Court Justice Mary Yu, co-chair of the Minority and Justice Commission.

"I'm certain many here know this, but I want to emphasize just how unusual and admirable it is to have a state supreme court that is focused on education, both in educating themselves on important

issues affecting society, but also in sharing that education with the larger community," said Seattle University Law School Dean Annette Clark, in introducing the speakers.

Research presented during the symposium focused on a groundbreaking study from Boston on newly-released prisoners which achieved remarkable entry into their lives and their histories; research on community barriers to housing, employment and education; research on barriers to maintaining family connections and support; and examples of programs that are successful in helping former prisoners build new lives.

The Boston Reentry Study found that:

- Former prisoners had overwhelmingly violent childhoods, with more than 40 percent witnessing homicides,

SYMPOSIUM, CONTINUED NEXT PAGE





SYMPOSIUM, CONTINUED

more than 50 percent experiencing serious abuse (spanking was not included), and more than a third witnessing domestic violence on a regular basis. The participants saw violence as a normal part of life.

- School was not a refuge, with 81 percent being suspended or expelled, often as early as elementary school.
- Nearly all females in the study had been victims of sexual violence.
- Those with family support adjusted better than those without. Younger persons had more family support compared with older or mentally ill persons.
- Finding employment was transformative, but very difficult to achieve, and more difficult for female ex-prisoners — one year after leaving prison, 57

percent of the men were employed compared to 27 percent of the women.

The data in Washington revealed both good news and bad news — Washington has one of the lowest incarceration rates in the nation, but has one of the higher incarceration rates for people of color. While the incarceration rates for the U.S. are declining, Washington's are slightly increasing.

Washington researchers reported that barriers to housing, employment and education for former prisoners often came from the widespread availability of electronic criminal records, as well as policies that bar former prisoners from renting, being hired, or taking advantage of financial aid for education.

Family connections are also harmed if a returning family member cannot live with his or her family due to

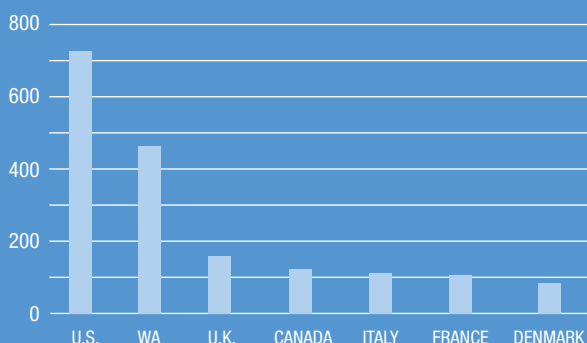
housing policies, if parental rights are terminated just because of prison status, or if visitation is onerous, among other policies and practices.

Another significant barrier toward reentering society was the imposition of fines and fees ("legal financial obligations") and the consequences imposed by courts for non-payment, including re-incarceration.

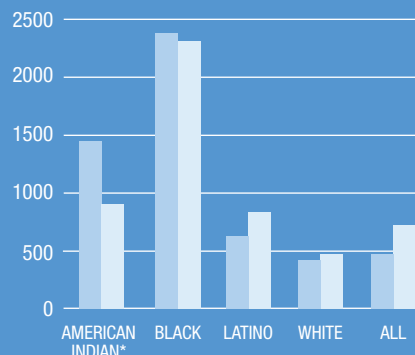
Recommendations for removing reentry barriers and helping former prisoners re-join their families and society were diverse, involving criminal records, policies on housing and financial aid, changes in how legal financial obligations are enforced, better support of family connections while persons are incarcerated, and more.

Visit the Minority and Justice Commission web page to view the [full symposium](#) and for access to the research and slide presentations.

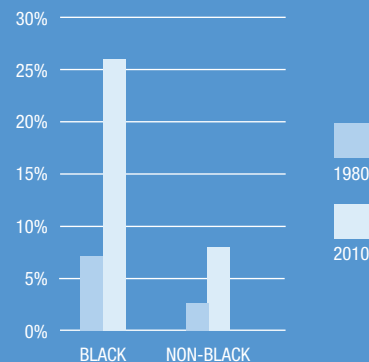
INCARCERATION RATES
WASHINGTON & FOUNDING NATO COUNTRIES, 2012-2013
PER 100,000 RESIDENTS



INCARCERATION RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY
WASHINGTON VS. UNITED STATES, 2010-2011
PER 100,000 RESIDENTS



PROPORTION OF U.S. ADULTS WITH A FELONY RECORD



Data from *The Reentry Challenge in Washington State*, Katherine Beckett, University of Washington

*Also includes Alaska Natives



Study Results Stir Recommitment to Closing Justice Gap

A 2015 update of the groundbreaking 2003 Washington State Civil Legal Needs Study documents that more than 70 percent of low-income households continue to experience profound civil legal problems each year and that, of these, more than three quarters do not get any legal help at all.

The 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study Update further documents that the average number of legal problems per low-income household has tripled; the substance of the most prevalent problems has changed; and that victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and young people disproportionately experience civil legal problems that affect their family safety and economic security, their ability to get and keep a job, their ability to live in safe and affordable housing, and their access to necessary health care.

The survey of 1,600 low-income Washingtonians from across the state was conducted by Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center during the fall and winter of 2014. The rigorous methodology employed generated findings that have a confidence level of 95 percent, plus or minus 3 percent.

The study's findings suggest that nearly 500,000 low-income Washington residents do not get help with important civil legal problems each year.

"We must recognize the consequences of a system of justice in our state that denies a significant portion of our population the ability to assert and defend their core legal rights," said Supreme Court Justice Charles K. Wiggins, chair of the Civil Legal Needs Study Update Committee. "We can and we must do better."

After years of budget cuts and stagnant funding, the Office

Desperate to stop her abusive ex-spouse from gaining custody of their daughter, but unable to afford a lawyer, Anna spent hours in the local library with court documents spread on the counter and plugging coins into a copy machine. She didn't understand how the judicial system worked and admitted to making "a lot of mistakes." She missed so many days of work that she lost her job at the Skookum shipyard.

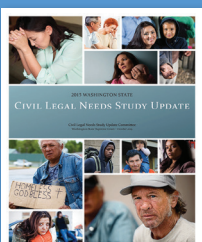
2015 WASHINGTON CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS STUDY UPDATE

of Civil Legal Aid reports that there are now only 108 state-funded legal aid attorneys for nearly 1.25 million people living at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level.

This results in just one state-funded legal aid attorney for about every 11,500 low-income Washingtonians. This is less than half of the nationally recognized minimal level of service of one legal aid attorney for every 5,000 eligible low-income residents.

Over the coming months, the Office of Civil Legal Aid and the bipartisan Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee will work with the Supreme Court's Access to Justice Board and key stakeholders to develop and present a comprehensive response to the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study Update. This will call for, among other things, increased civil legal aid presence across the state, expanded support for pro bono legal services, greater use of technology to inform low-income residents of their legal rights and where and how to get legal help, and increased access to self-help legal services.

Find the [full 32-page report](#) on the Office of Civil Legal Aid website.



Average number of legal problems per household	
2003	2014
3.3	9.3

Survey results compared	2003	2014
Households experienced at least one legal problem	75-79%	71.1%
Average number of legal problems per household	3.3	9.3
Households with four or more legal problems	38-54%	46.3%



NEWS BRIEFS



Washington's Tribal State Court Consortium Brings Jurisdictions Together

Washington's new Tribal State Court Consortium (TSCC) met twice in 2015, with meetings hosted in February by the Suquamish Tribe and in September by the Swinomish Tribe. The Consortium meetings gave state and tribal judges a chance to discuss justice issues of common concern such as providing "full faith and credit" for protection orders, which means orders issued in one jurisdiction must be recognized and enforced in other jurisdictions.

The Tribal State Court Consortium (TSCC) is a joint effort between state and tribal court judicial officers and other judicial branch members to expand communication and collaboration. The TSCC provides an open, transparent forum where state and tribal court judicial officers can come together and discuss jurisdictional issues, gaps in services, and ways to develop lasting partnerships. The Consortium is focusing its efforts on domestic violence and sexual assault issues, dependency cases involving Indian children, and the disproportionate number of Indian youth in the juvenile justice system.

The Consortium is supported with grants from the Washington State Gender and Justice Commission, as well as input from the Minority and Justice Commission, and the Commission on Children in Foster Care.



Legal Financial Obligations Reference Guide Updated

The Washington State Minority and Justice Commission has developed an updated guide to Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs) in order to provide information to courts and the public regarding financial costs assigned to court users. LFOs include restitution, fees, fines, assessments, and other costs imposed by courts as part of a criminal judgment upon conviction.

The administering of LFOs is being examined by judicial branch members concerned about disparate impact on the poor, as well as barriers to reentering society following convictions and/or prison.

The reference guide explains different types of assessments, the state laws involving those assessments, which assessments are mandatory and which are discretionary, as well as other issues involving LFOs.



Conference Provides Unique Opportunity for Female Offenders

The annual Women Offender's Conference at Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women in Belfair gave about 170 female offenders at the prison the opportunity to hear from speakers such as Court of Appeals Judge Jill Johanson and to attend workshops on confidence building, processing trauma, obtaining a driver's license after incarceration, finding employment, and more.

"Success Inside and Out: I'm Ready" was the result of a partnership between the Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission, the Department of Corrections' Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW), the National Association of Women Judges, and Zonta International.

Community organizations were on hand to help offenders become familiar with resources available to them currently and after release. All offenders attending the conference had four years or fewer left in their sentences.

MCCCW staff began the conference in 2009 to provide resources and address specific needs of female offenders as they prepare for successful release, according to Richard Gobble, a human resources consultant at the prison.



Studies Part of Growing Effort to Identify and Understand Needs of High Risk Youth



Washington court researchers have learned a great deal in the past 18 months about children and teens in the state's juvenile justice system, using exhaustive research to learn more about which youth end up in the system and why, whether programs and processes in the juvenile system are working as intended, and which efforts are showing promise.

The Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) released three reports in 2015 and one in mid-2014 examining data on multi-system youth (children and teens involved in both the criminal and dependency systems), truant youth, and the impacts of dependency processes on the lives of young people.

The studies are part of a growing effort to identify and understand the needs of

high-risk youth and provide information that helps "inspire statewide action toward system reform," wrote one study author Catherine Pickard, Senior Research Associate with WSCCR.

Each report includes recommendations for improving justice system outcomes for children and teens. In addition, the data can be used by courts, governmental agencies and community organizations working to improve the juvenile justice system.

The studies focused on:

Truancy

The number of truancy filings in Washington have increased dramatically in the past two decades. However, in 2010/11 only about one third of chronically truant students received truancy petitions; of those who did receive

truancy petitions, more than 60 dropped out without receiving a diploma, GED or other academic credentials.

These were among the findings of an October 2015 study by WSCCR 20 years after the state Legislature passed the "Becca Laws" in 1995. The Becca Laws were named for Becca Hedman, a chronic runaway who was murdered at the age of 12. The laws were designed to give families, schools, students and courts the ability to jointly address the problems causing truancy, which has serious consequences for students and communities throughout the students' life.

Since then, school districts and juvenile courts throughout the state have implemented a variety of programs and practices designed to meet the law, and help truant youth and their families.

"Twenty years later, it is time to capitalize on these experiences in order to develop effective truancy prevention programs that reach the students they are meant to serve," according to the study's Executive Summary. "The truancy petition process represents the letter of Washington's truancy laws, but ignores their spirit and intent. The intent of the Becca laws is to unite schools, courts, communities and families in an effort to provide the services needed to help students overcome their own personal barriers to school attendance."

The study, "[Truancy in Washington State: Filing Trends, Juvenile Court Responses, and the Educational Outcomes of Petitioned Truant Youth](#)," was authored by Dr. Elizabeth Coker of the University of Washington, Tacoma, and Dr. Carl

JUVENILE, CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



JUVENILE, CONTINUED

McCurley of WSCCR, with funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The report includes evidence-based policy recommendations for improving truancy programs and practices such as focusing on identifying youth in earlier grades who are beginning to have problems, and establishing more Community Truancy Boards, which were shown to be effective.

Multi-System Youth

Nearly half of all young people who find themselves in juvenile court for alleged law-violating behavior also have a history of involvement in the child welfare system, according to the 2014 WSCCR study, “Prevalence and Characteristics of Multi-System Youth in Washington State.”

That study was followed with a December 2015 report examining the county-by-county numbers of multi-system involvement in hopes of identifying the impacts of local system characteristics, programs and policies.

Called “multi-system,” “cross-over,”

or “dual status” youth, these young people may be foster children, or members of families being investigated or monitored by child welfare officials. About 44 percent of youth referred to the juvenile justice system in 2010 had previously been reported to Children’s Administration for alleged abuse and/or neglect, or placed for any period of time in out-of-home care.

The research also found that female youth and youth of color from the child welfare system have a substantially greater risk of finding themselves in the juvenile justice system than comparable white males, and that, on average, juvenile offenders with child welfare system history make initial contact with the juvenile justice system at a younger age than offenders with no child welfare involvement.

Dependency

A joint study of WSCCR and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) released in February 2015 found that dependency cases — court cases in which the welfare and permanent status of children is being determined — conclude more quickly when those cases meet key process timelines

compared to cases which do not meet those timelines.

The study was undertaken as part of the federal Court Improvement Program (CIP), a grant program focused on improving outcomes for children in foster care. The study examined such milestones as how often first review hearings were held within six months, how often the first permanency planning hearing was held within 12 months, and how often a termination of parental rights petition was filed within 15 months.

The study found sometimes significant differences in the length of dependency cases — how long it took for a child’s case to be resolved — when timelines were met. For instance, cases where the first review hearing was held within six months lasted a median of 85 days less than court cases when that milestone was not met. In cases where termination of parental right petitions were filed within 15 months, dependent children found resolution a median of 371 days sooner than in cases where the timeline was not met.

“This shows there is a relationship between meeting case milestones and time in (foster) care,” said McCurley.

WSCCR

The Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) was established in 2004 by order of the Washington Supreme Court, and serves as the research arm of the Administrative Office of the Courts. Its research is intended to improve understanding of the courts, help guide judicial policy and improve the functioning of the judicial system while serving all participants in the judicial process.



“Every year, more than **40,000** Washington students are chronically truant from schools across the state.”

STUDY: *TRUANCY IN WASHINGTON STATE: FILING TRENDS, JUVENILE COURT RESPONSES, AND THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF PETITIONED TRUANT YOUTH*



Modern Case Management System Launches in Four Counties in 2015

After processing cases for more than 38 years in what was a cutting-edge information system in the 1970s, superior courts and county clerk offices in Lewis, Franklin, Thurston and Yakima counties successfully began operating with a new modern case management system in 2015.

Lewis County served in June as the pilot site for the new Odyssey system, which will be implemented in nearly every superior court and county clerk office around the state over the next three years. “Early adopter” sites in Franklin, Thurston and Yakima counties successfully launched the system in November.

“Franklin County is happy to report that Odyssey GO-LIVE was successful and we are currently accomplishing our daily work on time,” said Franklin County Superior Court Administrator Pat Austin in an email to other administrators following the November launch. “As with any new system there are learning

curves and adjustments to either our business processes or the system, but I have been overwhelmingly pleased to say those have been minimal. We have ample support by AOC and Tyler and are happy to be an early adopter.”

The system will be implemented in Snohomish County in May 2016, followed by Spokane, Whitman, Garfield, Asotin and Columbia counties in October 2016. A roll-out schedule for the rest of the state can be found online.

Odyssey provides better access to information and modern case management functions not available on the 1970s SCOMIS case processing system most superior courts are still using. The system also provides modern communication and information-sharing abilities between courts across the state.

“Washington superior courts and county clerks handle high caseload volumes in matters critical to ensuring the safety, well-being and civil rights of state residents.

Courts and clerks must have quality data and quick access to information to work accurately and efficiently,” said Washington Supreme Court Justice Mary Fairhurst, chair of the Judicial Information System Committee.

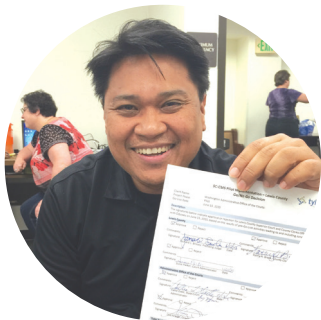
“With legislators’ help, the courts have worked hard and carefully to research, choose and implement a modern system that will truly help courts do their important work,” Fairhurst said. “We are very pleased with the success of Odyssey and look forward to the day the system is successfully implemented throughout the state.”

The search for a modern case management system for Washington superior courts began in 2010 at the request of the Superior Court Judges’ Association, the Washington State Association of County Clerks and the Association of Washington Superior Court Administrators. Odyssey was developed by Tyler Technologies of

SC-CMS, CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



Franklin County Clerk staff members pause for a group photo during the Odyssey launch on November 1.



LEFT PHOTO: Dexter Mejia, Manager, Office of Court Business and Technology holds the Go-Live Decision for pilot site Lewis County. MIDDLE PHOTO: Yakima County Superior Court Administrator Robyn Berndt signs the Go-Live Decision. RIGHT PHOTO: Lewis County Clerk staff members show their "spirit fingers" for the new Odyssey case management system on launch day in June.

SC-CMS, CONTINUED

Texas specifically for court case management and has been implemented in counties and states around the U.S., most recently in Oregon. The system was chosen for Washington superior courts after an extensive search and evaluation process involving courts and county clerk offices throughout the state.

The current case processing system used by Washington superior courts was built by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in the 1970s and was considered cutting edge at that time, but is now expensive to maintain and repair and does not have the badly needed functionality of a modern system.

One component of the successful implementations has been the extra

"We are very pleased with the success of Odyssey and look forward to the day the system is successfully implemented throughout the state."

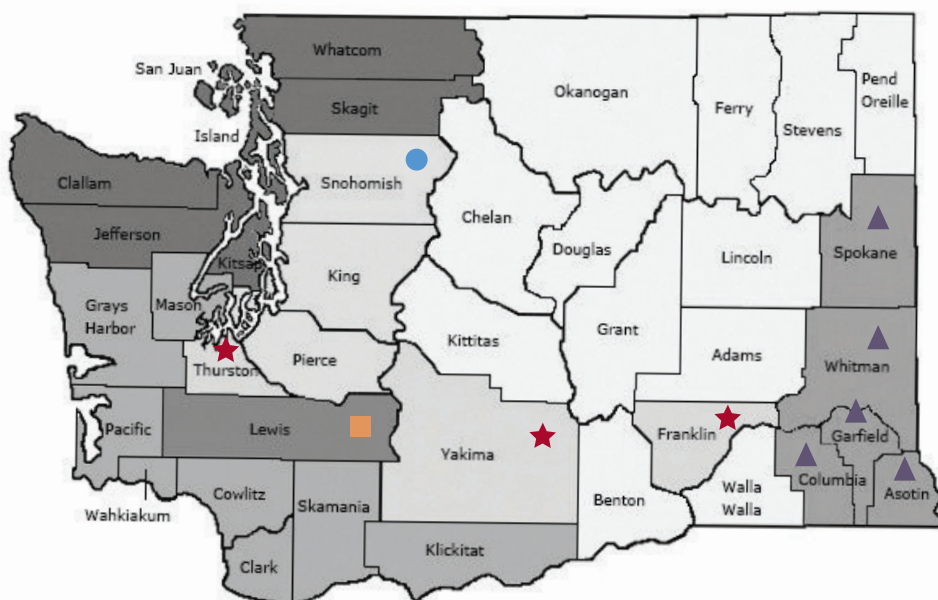
JUSTICE MARY FAIRHURST, CHAIR, JUDICIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM COMMITTEE

effort put in by "power users" in each courthouse. These are staff members who train more extensively on the new system and then help both their fellow staff members learn the system, and later help staff members in new counties with the learning curve.

With each successive implementation, more power users and system experts will be available to help the staff members of newly-implementing counties.

"We are thrilled with the success of the Early Adopter launch of the Odyssey system," said state Court Administrator Callie T. Dietz. "Any large technology implementation is complex and a great deal of work. The staff members in the courthouses and at AOC have put in a tremendous number of work hours and an outstanding effort that will greatly benefit the work of the courts and the residents of our state."

2015-16 SC-CMS Launch Schedule



State Court Administrator Callie T. Dietz and Vonnie Diseth, Director, Information Services Division sign-off on the Go-Live Decision for Lewis County.

- Pilot Site; Launched in 2015
- ★ Launched in 2015
- Launch Scheduled for May 2016
- ▲ Launch Scheduled for October 2016

See the [SC-CMS Implementation Map](#) for future launch dates.



First Phase of CLJ-CMS Project Begins with Search and Procurement of System

Plans will move into high-gear in 2016 to locate a modern case management system to replace the aging District Court Information System (DISCIS) system now serving Washington courts of limited jurisdiction.

The Courts of Limited Jurisdiction Case Management System (CLJ-CMS) Project received \$3.8 million in funding from state lawmakers for the first phase of the project which began in January 2016. Preparations to launch the project quickly, however, were underway throughout 2015.

The CLJ-CMS project was approved unanimously in February 2014 by the Judicial Information System Committee (JISC) as the top technology need of the CLJ courts. Members of the project's Court User Work Group have completed the gathering of system requirements — an extensive amount of work that defines and specifies what is needed in a new system.

This information is critical for the next phases of searching for and procuring a system.

The DISCIS system was built and launched in 1987 to serve the district and municipal courts in Washington. Implementation was completed in 1991 and there has been no significant upgrade of the system since that time, despite significant

growth in population, caseloads, and extensive advancements in technology.

Washington now has approximately 250 courts of limited jurisdictions which receive more than 2 million cases per year and process 18 million transactions a month. They account for 87 percent of the state's court caseloads and their aging case management system is in dire need of modernization.

Taking lessons learned from the Superior Court Case Management System (SC-CMS) project, the CLJ-CMS project will focus on locating and procuring a system that has already been developed for the market — what is called a “commercial-off-the-shelf” (COTS) system. An in-depth feasibility study for the SC-CMS project found this approach to be the most viable and least risky (as opposed to a system being built from scratch, or other approaches).

Though the Odyssey system by Tyler Technologies was chosen for the SC-CMS project, no product has yet been chosen for the CLJ-CMS project. The planning and procurement process will follow important steps for a large technology project and be guided by the CLJ-CMS Steering Committee and Court User Work Group.

For more information, visit www.courts.wa.gov/cljcms.



CLJ-CMS
COURTS OF LIMITED JURISDICTION
CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

“Washington now has approximately **250 courts of limited jurisdictions** which receive more than **2 million cases** per year and process **18 million transactions** a month. They account for **87 percent** of the state's court caseloads and their aging case management system is in dire need of modernization.”



AC-ECMS PROJECT UNDERWAY

The Appellate Court Enterprise Content Management System (AC-ECMS) project acquires and implements a common content management system for the three divisions of the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, which currently all use separate systems, including continued paper filing. The AC-ECMS project will enable the electronic filing of court documents and more efficient content management.

Data Projects Key to Modern Technology Upgrades

A key component of many efforts to modernize Washington technology systems is information and the need to upgrade its access and use by high-functioning new systems.

Having systems that share information easily is a primary driver of the search for statewide case management systems to serve most of the state's courts. The courts in King County want to know (often quickly) if a defendant has a criminal history in Grant County, and vice versa. Researchers and policy makers want statewide pictures of crime and court trends. Justice partners such as the Washington State Patrol and Department of Social and Health Services need statewide judicial information to do their work.

That is where a group of new data projects — part of the Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC) over-arching Information Network Hub program — become important. The data projects will provide much of the foundation from which the other systems and programs will operate.

The most immediate of the data projects is the Expedited Data Exchange (EDE), which received approximately \$8 million in funding from state lawmakers. King County District Court will serve as the pilot court for the Exchange primarily

because the court has opted to implement its own case management system more quickly rather than joining the Courts of Limited Jurisdiction Case Management System project (CLJ-CMS) now underway.

With the King County court implementing its own case management system, it needs a way to share its data with courts statewide — party and case information, warrants, proceedings, case status and conditions, and accounting information — and also to have access to statewide information.

Though the Exchange is the most immediate data project, others are also underway. Additional AOC data projects include:

Expedited Data Exchange (EDE)

A program comprised of five project tracks to address the development of the Core Enterprise Data Repository (EDR) and to make all existing systems inter-operate with it to facilitate information sharing for courts. The five interrelated projects under this master EDE program are: Core EDR, Data Integration, Application Integration, Data Validation and Reference Data Management, and Data Warehouse.

Core Enterprise Data Repository (EDR)

A project to create a central data repository of statewide court information

that will be the authoritative source of person data and trusted source of case data for the Washington judicial system. Data contained in the EDR is based on the "JIS Data Standards for Alternative Automated Court Record Systems" that was approved by the Judicial Information System Committee (JISC) in October of 2014. The EDR will include a hub-and-spoke model for the exchange of data with a set of web services and other transaction interfaces. All court case management systems and justice partners will send their data to this repository and will likewise retrieve information from other courts to create complete histories.

Information Network Hub (INH)

The over-arching data concept that will be comprised of a central data repository (the EDR), an essential set of data exchange services, and an infrastructure that supports the exchange of data. This will facilitate sharing of data between local courts using their own case management systems, the sharing of statewide data from existing JIS applications (such as SCOMIS, DISCIS, JCS) and the new statewide case management systems being developed, and provide a mechanism for sharing of court data with justice partners such as the Washington State Patrol.



Administrative Court Records Rule Effective January 2016

After more than five years of effort and thousands of hours of work, a court rule and support framework for providing judicial branch administrative records upon request became effective January 1, 2016.

The new rule requires courts and judicial branch agencies to adopt policies implementing procedures for accepting and responding to administrative records requests.

Though courts and branch agencies have provided records for years, official processes, timelines and definitions for administrative records have not been available until now. Also available now are forms, templates, model policies, training videos, FAQs and more to help courts and judicial branch agencies meet new requirements.

Administrative records are those created by or maintained by a court or judicial agency related to the management, supervision or administration of the court or judicial agency. The goal of the new official process is increased transparency in the operations of Washington's judiciary.

Following years of debate about whether the judicial branch should be added to the state Public Records Act or develop its own rules for providing administrative records, General Court Rule 31.1 Access to Administrative Records (GR 31.1) was adopted by the Washington Supreme Court in October 2013.

Establishing the rule within the branch honors the separation of powers, and protects unique judicial branch records such as those from judges' chambers.

"Consistent with the principles of open administration of justice...a presumption of access applies to the judiciary's

administrative records," says the rule's introduction. "Access to administrative records, however, is not absolute and shall be consistent with exemptions for personal privacy, restrictions in statutes, restrictions in court rules, and as required for the integrity of judicial decision-making."

The effective date of GR 31.1 was suspended until judicial branch members could complete the extensive work of developing official requirements and guidelines for complying with the rule.

Over the past two years, those requirements, guidelines and resources have been developed by four committees of the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA), as well as support staff members of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

"The committee members working on GR 31.1 have put in countless hours of research, drafting, reviewing, discussing and revising in order to create a comprehensive plan for helping courts implement this rule," said AOC Public Records Officer Jan Nutting. "We can't thank them enough for their dedication and their work."

Openness and transparency in judicial administration is critical for public trust and confidence in the courts, said retired Chief Justice Gerry Alexander, who in 2009 urged creation of such a rule. It is now an important part of the job for court workers, he said.

"I am very proud of the present [Supreme] Court's adoption of GR 31.1," Alexander said in an instructional video introducing the topic. "I believe this rule...will increase the confidence of Washingtonians in their court system."

TIMELINE

A History of GR 31.1

2009

Washington Supreme Court, in *City of Federal Way v. Koenig*, determined that court administrative records were not addressed in Washington's Public Records Act (RCW 42.56), which pertains to the executive and legislative branches. Chief Justice Gerry Alexander urged creation of a court rule to address administrative records.

2009

The Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) appointed a workgroup and began crafting a general court rule that could address the unique nature of court administrative records. This was chosen as the direction for providing records rather than courts being added to the Public Records Act.

JUNE 2011

First draft of a court rule proposed by BJA, published for comments.

SEPTEMBER 2012

Second draft published for comments.

EARLY 2013

Third draft published for comments.

OCTOBER 2013

Final version of GR 31.1 adopted by Supreme Court without an effective date, to allow time for implementation planning.

LATE 2013

BJA formed four different GR 31.1 implementation committees to develop best practices, model public records policies and procedures, templates, training recommendations and resources, and more.

JUNE 2015

Supreme Court approved GR 31.1 implementation plan.

JANUARY 1, 2016

GR 31.1 becomes effective.



Free Online Access to Published Opinions

The full historical set of published opinions of the Washington Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals, dating back through territorial days, will be available on the new Washington State Judicial Opinions website, due to launch by the end of January 2016.

The website — free of charge and open to the public — was created by LexisNexis as part of a contract signed with the Supreme Court in 2014.

To access the new site, visit the Washington Courts' website at www.courts.wa.gov and click on the "Opinions" tab at the top of the page. A link to the new site will be posted once it has launched.

The intent of this project is two-fold — to enhance access to justice by providing the public with free access to an accurate online version of the state's precedential case law, and to bring the appellate courts closer to the point of having fully official opinions available online.

For the public, the new website is a major improvement over other alternatives for accessing electronic versions of the Supreme Court's and Court of Appeals' published opinions.

Prior to the new website, options to access published opinions have included the Washington Courts' website (slip opinions only); Westlaw, which requires a paid subscription and differs from official versions in the Washington Reports; and the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) website, which has provided free access to published opinions, but varies significantly from official published opinions due to lack of updating, uncorrected errors, and

variable source quality.

By comparison, the published opinions on the new website will be available free of charge, will be fully edited and updated. The text of those opinions is intended to mirror word-for-word the opinions that are printed in the Washington Reporter volumes.

The opinions on the new website will not be designated as fully official — the printed reports will still be considered as the official version — but there should be almost no variation between the two. Opinion language from the new website can be quoted with confidence in its accuracy.

While the new website will include the state's published appellate opinions, it will not include unpublished opinions as they parallel what is already contained in official reports.

Features of the new website include the full text of each published opinion along with introductory background statements about the case and the official paragraph numbers. The site will also have a fully functional search engine that allows both natural language searches and Boolean searches.

Slip opinions will continue to be posted on the Washington Courts' website. Once a slip opinion has been superseded by the edited version on the new website (and in the books), the slip opinions on the Washington Courts' website will be prominently marked to indicate that the slip opinion has been superseded and to direct users to the new website.



APPELLATE OPINIONS

Slip Opinions

The first release of an appellate opinion, the "slip" opinion, does not necessarily represent the court's final decision in the case since it is subject to reconsideration, modification orders, editorial corrections, and withdrawal. The official reports advance sheets and bound volumes supersede the slip opinions.

Published Opinions

Opinions that have precedential value, which include all opinions of the Supreme Court and those opinions of the Court of Appeals that the panel of judges determines have precedential value.

Unpublished Opinions

Court of Appeals' opinions determined by the judges not to have precedential value.





AOC Provides Centralized Services as Primary Support Agency

In 1957, no one in Washington state knew how many courts existed across the state, where they were all located, or who the judges were.

No one knew how many cases were filed statewide, how many trials were conducted, or how much was being spent on courts and justice services. No technical assistance existed to help court staff with questions or procedures.

Pro tem judges could only earn \$10 a day, per the 1889 state constitution, and were often paid additionally by litigants themselves who wanted quicker access to courts and judges. There were no conferences or training opportunities for judges

Administrative Office of the Courts in every state in the nation and our American territories, a network allowing for the exchange of national concepts and evidence-based approaches to court management state to state.

Here in Washington, AOC remains the primary support agency for Washington courts, providing centralized services in the areas of technology, training, research, interpreter training and testing, judicial salaries and benefits, budgetary tracking and planning, legislative relations, maintenance of caseload statistics and numerous court directories, coordination of broad improvement efforts involving funding, access to courts,



“Our mission is to advance the efficient and effective operation of the state’s judicial system. Our employees are very dedicated to that goal, as are the many judges, clerks, court staff and court administrators who work with us to continually improve the justice system for the people of Washington.”

CALLIE T. DIETZ
Washington State Court Administrator

or court staff. No guidelines existed on the staffing needed to efficiently operate a court.

With a feeling of urgency that the population was exploding, that court workloads (though not quantified) were seriously uneven, and that operations of courts across the state were primarily a mystery, the 1957 state Legislature approved a law — attaching an emergency clause — creating the position of Administrator for the Courts (AFC).

The agency’s primary purpose was to find out what was happening in the superior courts by collecting statistics on courts, judges, cases, trials, delays, expenditures and more. Its second mission was to establish an annual judicial conference, a first opportunity for judges, Bar Association leaders and state officials to speak about justice and administration issues.

AFC — now the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) — was the 18th such agency created in the U.S. to support local courts, provide technical assistance and promote fair and equitable administration of justice. Today, there is an

efficiency, bias and other crucial justice issues (see page 19 for a partial list of court support services).

A centralized support agency is important because of Washington’s decentralized judiciary — meaning that while the state Supreme Court and the Board for Judicial Administration have an overarching policy role in the judicial branch, courts are administered at the local level.

Court administrators, commissioners and staff are hired by the local court leaders, and courts establish local operating rules (as long as they don’t conflict with statewide court rules). Court budgets, buildings and other infrastructure are largely controlled by local lawmakers.

With so much court operation directed at the local level, a statewide agency to coordinate information, support and statewide judicial branch efforts is crucial. AOC also plays a critical role in providing consistent and timely information on the judicial branch to other state agencies and the Legislature.

AOC is based in Olympia and has 230 employees in four divisions.



WORK OF THE COURTS

STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

The Washington State Court Administrator is appointed by the Supreme Court to act as a liaison between the judicial, executive, and legislative branches, justice partners and other state agencies. The Court Administrator oversees operations for more than 230 employees in four divisions of service within AOC.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

Under the direction of the State Court Administrator, the ASD provides dependable leadership, effective planning, and exceptional service to the courts to:

- Coordinate staffing and representation on more than 100 workgroups, committees, commissions, boards and task forces working on justice issues.
- Track 849 bills and amendments and reviewed just under 2,500 bills during the 2015 legislative session.
- Direct public information outreach efforts such as notifications of appellate opinions and court rule changes, response to public and media inquiries and more.
- Coordinate, train, test, and monitor 337 certified or registered court interpreters in 38 languages in 2015.
- Serve as direct staff support to the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA).
- Maintain nearly 200 research charts on the work of the courts and court management tools. Also conduct in-depth research into critical justice issues such as dependency, truancy, bias and more. This is made possible by the Washington State Center for Court Research.

INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION

Supports the technology needs of the judicial branch through the Judicial Information System (JIS) to:

- Oversee more than 41 million JIS transactions by more than 17,500 court, state, federal and public users in June 2015.
- Facilitate 1.6 million daily JIS transactions in 2014, up from 200,000 in 1994.
- Provide response time of less than 2/10 of a second, down from 1.5 seconds in 1994.
- Manage 38.5 million case records and 57.7 million person records.
- Conduct annual disaster recovery tests to ensure that JIS records and systems are protected in the event of a disaster, and courts can function.

MANAGEMENT SERVICES DIVISION

Provides judicial branch budget planning, accounting, procurement, contract management, revenue monitoring and analysis, as well as copy and building services to:

- Manage and distribute nearly \$85 million in state funding to trial courts for judicial salaries, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), processing truancy petitions, interpreter reimbursement, juvenile and family court services.
- Provide 312 judicial impact fiscal notes in 2015 — the second highest in the state.
- Manage financial activities and forecasts for AOC, the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) with combined annual expenditures exceeding \$128 million.
- Facilitate development of judicial branch biennial and supplemental budgets (total combined biennial budget of \$336 million).
- Produce more than 1.9 million pages of legal briefs and more than 800,000 pages of educational materials through AOC Copy Center.
- Provide public records and emergency management services to the AOC and judicial branch agencies as needed.
- Re-certify more than 300 professional guardians each year who provide services to about 4,500 incapacitated persons and train approximately 5,000 lay guardians.

JUDICIAL SERVICES DIVISION

Provides comprehensive support to the state's judges, clerks, court administrators and their staff to:

- Provide legal services to trial and appellate courts such as benchbook development and coordination, jury instruction coordination and staffing, analysis of legislation involving courts, legal and administrative coordination of court rules and much more.
- Serve as direct staff support to the Superior Court Judges' Association (SCJA), the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association (DMCJA), and appellate court judges and staff.
- Maintain more than 710 court forms, with an average of 141 legislative changes each year.
- Respond to more than 3,700 Help Desk calls and online requests from courts each month.
- Develop and coordinate more than 8,000 training program hours for more than 1,550 judges, county clerks, commissioners, court staff and others in 2014.
- Update more than 1,100 laws in the Judicial Information System (JIS) Law Table in 2015.
- Update and design AOC public- and internal-facing websites. Manage more than 14.5 million visits per month to public and case search websites in 2015.



Caseload Statistics

Statistics on the caseloads of the courts of Washington are compiled from the Judicial Information System (JIS) to provide a detailed overview of the case work of the courts. This page contains one chart from each court level in the state. Dozens of charts are available on the numbers of case filings, types of cases, proceedings and outcomes from the most recent year calculated, as well as hundreds of archived charts for past years' case activities online at www.courts.wa.gov/caseload. Visitors to this page can also sign up to be notified when the most recent reports are available.

Courts of Limited Jurisdiction

2014 CASE FILINGS (BY TYPE)

	2014
Infractions	
Traffic	824,729
Non Traffic	32,375
Misdemeanors	
DUI/Physical Control	28,588
Other Traffic	78,654
Non Traffic	106,136
Felony Complaints	6,572
Civil	126,131
Civil Harassment Protection	7,038
Domestic Violence Protection	1,789
Sexual Assault Protection	63
Stalking Protection	484
Small Claims	13,446
Total	1,226,005

Supreme Court

2014 COURT ACTIVITY (BY SOURCE OF REVIEW)

	TRIAL COURTS	COURT OF APPEALS	ORIGINAL ACTIONS	WSBA (CJC)	CERTIFIED ISSUES	TOTAL
Filings	144	1,118	143	107	3	1,515
Resolutions	139	926	54	1,829	0	2,948
Pending at Year End	68	644	9	10	4	735
Mandated	157	996	206	1,855	3	3,217



Superior Courts

2014 COURT ACTIVITY (BY TYPE)

	FILED	RESOLVED	COMPLETED
Criminal	40,473	39,780	40,051
Civil	116,399	114,769	114,971
Domestic	39,409	38,658	38,884
Probate/Guardianship	21,634	20,792	17,276
Adoption/Parentage	7,033	7,321	7,418
Mental Illness/Alcohol	11,192	10,571	9,123
Juvenile Dependency	20,456	19,128	18,181
Juvenile Offender	11,578	11,704	11,591
Total	268,174	262,723	257,495

Court of Appeals

2014 COURT ACTIVITY

	DIVISION I	DIVISION II	DIVISION III
Filings	1,457	1,268	796
Resolutions	1,577	1,324	730
Pending at Year End	1,282	1,252	822
Mandated	1,646	1,476	764



NEWS BRIEFS



Coming Wave of Retirements Will Impact State Judicial System

A membership study by the Washington State Bar Association found that more than half of all attorneys in the state are over 51 years old and a third may retire in the next five years. This affects state judges as well, who are also attorneys and members of the Bar Association.

"The retirement phase of the Boomer Generation has been long anticipated, and its prospective impact on the nation's workforce well-documented," according to the study, which was conducted by TrueBearing LLC. "As this study makes clear, however, this seismic shift in the workforce is now at hand, and the impact on all professions, including the practice of law, will be historic."

The study estimated that Washington could see reductions of 1,900 attorneys annually.

"In recent years, the news regarding the legal profession has been replete with articles chronicling a glut of attorneys nationally. It is highly probable that these headlines will change dramatically during the next few years, chronicling a shortage of seasoned attorneys."

The study also pointed out that the coming reductions will not be mitigated by "the current oversupply of recent graduates. Senior professionals cannot be replaced by fledgling attorneys."

The coming wave of retirements will mean "the potential loss of institutional and professional knowledge and leadership from legal settings in Washington," as well as a need to prepare new and incoming attorneys and judges to assume professional responsibilities through mentoring and leadership development.



Limited License Legal Technicians Now Practicing in Washington

In 2015, Washington became the first state in the nation to allow trained practitioners with a limited license to practice law, helping court users with less-complex legal needs. The first area of law approved for limited practice is family law, while other areas of law (such as elder law) are now under consideration.

The position of Limited License Legal Technician (LLLT) was created with the state Supreme Court in 2012 to address the growing need for affordable legal help. The regulations and requirements for the position were developed by a board appointed by the Court, and a licensing exam was ready in 2015. The position was patterned after the position of nurse practitioner in the medical field. While they cannot represent clients in court, Legal Technicians are able to consult and advise, complete and file necessary court documents, help with court scheduling and support a client in navigating the legal system.

The innovative new legal position has been reported by national media and is being watched by law schools and judicial systems through the U.S. as one possible solution to serious problems with access to justice for those who struggle to afford legal help.

In the Fall of 2015, 10 applicants passed the licensing exam and are now able to practice.



Memorial for Justice Robert Utter

Retired Washington Supreme Court Justice Robert F. Utter, who died October 15, 2014, was remembered with fondness and reverence during a memorial service at the Temple of Justice on April 29, 2015.

Justice Utter served the Court from 1971 to 1995, when he suddenly announced he was resigning because of his objections to the death penalty saying he could no longer participate in a judicial system that takes human life. He said the death penalty system “is fatally flawed... [it] strikes some but not others in a way that defies rational explanation.”

As Chief Justice from 1979-1981, he helped establish the Commission on Judicial Conduct (CJC).

Read more about the life of [Justice Robert Utter](#), or watch his [memorial service](#) on TVW.



Jury Scams Addressed

In 2015, the Washington State Court Management Council developed resources and worked on outreach to courts to distribute information regarding the ongoing jury scams that continue to target people throughout Washington and the U.S. The council developed a letter-to-the-editor template which can be used by judges and court administrators, an informational poster that can be printed and posted around courthouses, a list of key messages, and more. Visit www.courts.wa.gov/newsinfo/resources for more information.

Two Spokane Administrators Chosen as 2015 Court Managers of the Year

Spokane County Superior Court Administrator Ron Miles and Washington Court of Appeals Division III Administrator Renee Townsley were named 2015 Court Managers of the Year by the Washington State Court Management Council.

The Court Manager of the Year Award is presented to a manager or administrator who demonstrates leadership of regional or statewide impact.

Miles was nominated by Spokane County Superior Court Judge Sam Cozza for his work on implementation of a new information system and implementation of a new state court rule governing public access to court administrative records, as well as his excellent budget management.

Townsley was nominated by Court of Appeals Judge Laurel Siddoway for her extensive work with state and national organizations over the last 23 years toward improving the work of the courts, as well as her exceptional daily service. Townsley also played a key role in the amendment of appellate court rules to add efficiencies to the court transcriptionist procedure and provide better access to the courts.



Data Improvements for Adult Drug Courts

The Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) [released a report](#) in June 2015, updating data on participants in the state’s therapeutic drug courts. The project is a partnership between WSCCR and the adult felony drug courts in order to build on the information available to local court managers regarding how well drug courts fulfill their missions. The use of data has been proven to reduce expenditures and improve success of therapeutic courts. The data project will continue in 2016 including building a data repository and providing technical assistance to courts.



Supreme Court Adjusts Base Penalty for Traffic Infractions

On July 1, 2015, the penalty for a traffic infraction in Washington increased for the first time in eight years. An inflationary adjustment approved by the Supreme Court increased the maximum penalty for most infractions by \$12. It was the first increase since 2007.

The increase was proposed by Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD) and the Judicial Information System Committee (JISC) and was supported by the Superior Court Judges' Association, District and Municipal Court Judges' Association, Association of Washington Cities, and the Washington State Association of Counties.

"Our decision to raise the base was not an easy decision for the court to make. Indeed, we believe the needs of the court system should be funded from general funds, not from penalties for traffic infractions," said Chief Justice Barbara Madsen.

"However, given the current framework, a majority of the court believes the modest increase is reasonable, and is less than the state's fiscal growth factor would allow. We will continue to work with the Legislature and local courts to take active steps to reduce the potential harmful consequences for low income persons who are financially unable to pay."

How does that traffic ticket break down?

While the base penalty of \$48 is set by the court, all other fines and fees that go into traffic infractions are imposed by the Washington State Legislature. Total penalty amounts in 2015 generally increased by \$12 (to \$136 for unlisted traffic infractions). Penalty amounts set in statute or that have already reached the maximum \$250 base penalty did not increase.

The breakdown on penalty calculations are as follows: Base penalty plus 105% for Public Safety and Education, rounded up, plus a \$20 legislative assessment, plus a \$5 trauma care fee, plus a \$10 auto theft prevention fee, plus a \$2 Traumatic Brain Injury account fee.

EXAMPLE

Base Penalty	\$48
Public Safety and Education (105% of Base Penalty)	\$51
Subtotal	\$99
Legislative Assessment	\$20
Trauma	\$5
Auto Theft	\$10
Traumatic Brain Injury	\$2
Total	\$136



Foster Children Adopted

More than 180 foster children were adopted during National Adoption Day (NAD) celebrations in Washington courts and communities in November 2015. It was Washington's 11th annual statewide celebration of NAD, which strives to increase the adoptions of foster children who are legally available to join new families. In the 10 years from 2005 through 2014, nearly 15,000 foster children were adopted into new families, and the average time to adoption decreased by approximately 20 percent.

Washington's National Adoption Day celebration is sponsored by the state Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care and is co-sponsored by the state Department of Social and Health Services and WARM 106.9.



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